



UCLA AIDS CENTER
VAMC WEST LOS ANGELES
MAIL CODE 691/W111P
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90073

September 9, 1985

Harold E. Varmus, M.D.
Professor of Molecular Virology
School of Medicine
University of California, San Francisco
San Francisco, California 94143

Dear Dr. Varmus,

Please forgive the delay in my reply to your letter of August 12.

As to the naming of the AIDS retrovirus, I agree with you that political issues as well as scientific ones will ultimately decide the outcome. Most of my patients refer to this virus as either "the AIDS virus" or as "HTLV-III" or some alphabetic permutation of same. I refer to it as "HTLV-III" in conversation, and as "HTLV-III/LAV" when I write for publication.

I like the name "HTLV-III" because it does not directly connect the virus to AIDS: it is less traumatic to tell an asymptomatic patient that he has a positive HTLV-III antibody test than to tell him he has a positive AIDS-virus antibody test. Due to the unsettled taxonomic position of this virus, I understand that placing the virus in the family of human T cell leukemia viruses may ultimately not be justified. I would hope that the name eventually chosen would be emotionally neutral (i.e., exclude the word AIDS), yet scientifically accurate. Your suggestion of an acronym for the virus such as HALV, for human AIDS-lymphadenopathy virus, seems reasonable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Peter R. Wolfe".

Peter R. Wolfe, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Medicine